

What is claimed is:

1. In an interactive information distribution system utilizing an open session to provide requested information, a method comprising:

5 (a) receiving a title selection request from a set top terminal; and  
(b) in the case of a first request for said title by said set top terminal, performing the steps of:

opening a session with said set top terminal;

associating a use time with said requested title;

10 providing said requested title to said set top terminal; and

(c) in the case of a previously terminated session with said set top terminal existing, performing the steps of:

restoring said terminated session; and

15 providing said requested title to said set top terminal if said use time associated with said requested title has not expired.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein step (b) further comprises the step of:  
associating a view time with said requested title.

20 3. The method of step 2, wherein at step (c) said selected title is not provided to said set top terminal if said view time associated with said requested title has expired.

25 4. The method of claim 1, wherein step (c) further comprises the steps of:

opening a new session with said set top terminal if said use time associated with said requested title has expired;

associating a new use time with said requested title; and

providing said requested title to said set top terminal.

30 5. The method of claim 3, further comprising:

(d) opening a new session with said set top terminal if said view time associated with said requested title has expired;

associating a new use time and a new view time with said requested title; and

providing said requested title to said set top terminal.

5     6.     The method of claim 1, wherein at step (c) said selected title is provided to said set top terminal beginning at a previous termination point.

7.     The method of claim 1, wherein at step (c) said selected title is provided to said set top terminal beginning at a title start point.

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8.     The method of claim 1, wherein:

said set top terminal has associated with it an account, said account being billed for providing said requested title to said set top terminal; and

15     said use time defines the time within which said requested title may be accessed by said set top terminal without incurring an additional billing charge.

9.     The method of claim 1, wherein:

20     said set top terminal has associated with it an account, said account being billed for providing said requested title to said set top terminal; and

said view time defines the amount of time that said requested title may be presented by said set top terminal without incurring an additional billing charge.

25     10.    The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

(d)    terminating an open session in response to said use time associated with said requested title being expired.

30     11.    The method of claim 10, wherein said open session is terminated at step (d) only after said set top terminal has concluded presenting said requested title.

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12. The method of claim 10 wherein said open session is terminated at step (d) only after said set top terminal has requested that the providing of said requested title be halted.

5 13. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

(d) terminating an open session in response to said view time associated with said requested title being expired.

10 14. The method of claim 13, wherein said open session is terminated at step (d) only after said set top terminal has concluded presenting said requested title.

15 15. The method of claim 14, wherein said open session is terminated at step (d) only after said set top terminal has requested that the providing of said requested title be halted.

20 16. The method of claim 2, wherein:  
said view time is incremented while said requested title is presented by said set top terminal, said incrementing of said view time being halted in response to receiving a command indicative of a halt to said presentation.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein said command indicative of a halt to said presentation comprises one of a stop command and a pause command.

25 18. The method of claim 2, wherein:  
said view time is incremented while said requested title is presented by said set top terminal, said incrementing of said view time being halted in response to receiving a command causing said providing of said requested title to said set top terminal to cease.